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RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 4666
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RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 3442
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 5328
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 8332
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0366
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STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - PROSPECTS FOR MIDDLE
EAST PEACE

LEAD STORIES: Most Friday morning papers front-paged follow-ups on the scandal surrounding arrested former Vice Defense Moriya and his influence peddling for the defense hardware trading firm Yamada Corp., including allegations that Moriya instructed his aides to consider purchasing MSDF ship engines and GSDF armored vehicle equipment through Yamada.

1. "U.S. Role Most Important" The top circulation, moderate Yomiuri editorialized (11/30): "The fact that both Palestinian leader Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert have weak political bases is a source of concern.... Given the circumstances, it is even more imperative that Washington act as a peace broker. The Bush administration, with Iran in mind, invited to the Annapolis meeting Arab countries that do not have diplomatic ties with Israel. Tehran's presence in the region is continuing to grow due to its nuclear program and its influence in Shiite-dominated Iraq. Behind the increased presence of Iran and Islamic fundamentalists lies the stalemated peace process. If Washington has decided to alter its previous cautious position on brokering peace, hope for progress may be warranted."

2. "U.S. Leadership to Be Tested" The business-oriented Nikkei wrote (11/30): "Achieving a peace agreement in a year is an almost impossible goal. As a mediator, the U.S. bears heavy responsibility for ensuring progress and for not allowing things to end with just an empty 'expression of determination.' President Bush stressed that the time has come to resume peace talks and

expressed his resolve by saying he will do whatever he can. The President, who had hardly been engaged in Middle East peace talks since taking office, appears to have finally changed his position. Nevertheless, the U.S. has paid a high price for having done nothing over the past seven years. Anti-American sentiment has surged in the Middle East since the start of the Iraq war, with U.S. influence in the region having plunged. Washington, in the hope of reversing the situation, convened the Annapolis meeting in order to demonstrate a proactive line on peace in the Middle East."

SCHIEFFER